



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 14, 2011 REPORT NO. HRB-11-020

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of April 28, 2011

SUBJECT: **ITEM #7 – Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building**

APPLICANT: Gina Dronet c/o Kaid Marouf, REI Properties represented by Marie Burke Lia

LOCATION: 800 Prospect Street, La Jolla Community, Council District 1

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building located at 800 Prospect Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Park Place Condominiums/Russell Forester Building located at 800 Prospect Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of ca. 1963 under HRB Criteria C and D. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

1. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of Modern/International style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its ca. 1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its clean horizontal lines with concrete masonry and stucco exterior walls, floor-to-ceiling gray anodized aluminum windows and exterior doors combined with open balconies to create a sense of expanded space, and black vertical, non-structural standards that arch at the roof line.



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2. The resource is representative of a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester and retains integrity as it relates to the original design. Specifically, the resource retains the clean horizontal lines providing an impression of expanding living space and indoor/outdoor living common in Forester's designs.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owners' desire to have the site designated as a historical resource. The building is located in downtown La Jolla surrounded by commercial, single-family residential and multi-family residential properties.

The historic name of the resource, the Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the original name of the condominiums and the name of Master Architect Russell Forester.

ANALYSIS

A historical resource research was prepared by Marie Lia which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criteria A, C, and D. Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under HRB Criteria C and D, but not HRB Criterion A. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows:

CRITERION A - Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.

The consultant's report suggests that the property is significant under Criterion A as the first condominium in La Jolla. The report further states that the building served as an example of a new type of housing that became popular in the 1960s in California and established the concept of owner-occupied multi-family housing. While the basic information was provided by the consultant on the condominium project, a full analysis of whether or not the project was the first such project in San Diego and the impact that the construction had on La Jolla was not provided in sufficient detail. Therefore staff cannot recommend designation under HRB Criterion A.

CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.

Constructed ca. 1963 in the Modern/International style, the building has 30-units (1, 2, and 3 bedroom units) and 5 stories with a basement. The basement contains a parking garage, storage and laundry facilities. The building has reinforced concrete footings and basement walls. The exterior features grey concrete masonry, a stucco exterior with a flat roof. The exterior also features floor to ceiling anodized aluminum windows and doors to create an expanded living space from the interior to the balcony. Each floor also features a 3' extension of the interior

floors, which clearly define the 8' building module of each unit. The exterior is accented by black vertical non-structural standards that are arched at the roofline.

The main entrance to the building is located on Prospect Street and accessed via a cantilevered roof overhang and a curvilinear driveway defined by original ficus trees. The entrance is partially screened by a decorative wrought iron grill and gates. The foyer features grey tile with walnut paneled walls and frameless glass entrance doors. The garage is accessed via entrances on the alley and Eads Avenue.

While there have been a few alterations to the site, the most substantial modification, the balcony enclosure, was reversed and the remaining alterations do not detract from the overall character of the building. The garage doors that are not original to the building are not readily visible and the interior foyer alterations were done with similar materials and do not detract from the design aesthetic. Therefore, staff recommends designation under Criterion C as an excellent example of a Modern/International style building.

CRITERION D - Is representative of a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist or craftsman.

Russell Forester (1920-2002) was at the height of his architectural career when he began design of the Park Place Condominiums. He was well regarded as a commercial and residential designer by the 1950s. He is considered to have introduced the International Style to adventurous post-WWII consumers with his innovative designs for the original Jack in the Box drive-thru hamburger stands, the first of which was located on El Cajon Blvd.

Born in 1920 in Idaho, Forester moved to La Jolla when he was 5 years old. After graduation from La Jolla High School in 1938, Forester served in the Army Corps of Engineers and worked as a draftsman under Lloyd Ruocco. In 1948, he opened his first architectural office. By 1950 he began the formal training to become a licensed architect. He developed an affinity for the new International style while attending the Institute of Design in Chicago and studying under Mies Van Der Rohe. While he was not licensed until 1960, he designed several Modernist structures within San Diego including his own residence on Hillside Drive in La Jolla in 1952. After a 28 year career, during which he received a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) designation, he retired in 1976. After his retirement, Forester devoted his time to artistic endeavors becoming a well-known artist.

His philosophy used designs and materials that were suitable for the San Diego climate. He was one of the first San Diego architects to promote Mies Van Der Rohe's use of glass and steel construction in commercial and residential buildings

Since his death many of his designs have been demolished or seriously altered. One extant residence has been designated on the local register, the Dr. Harold C. and Frieda Daum Urey/Russell Forester House at 7890 Torrey Lane in La Jolla, in 2002 during which time he was declared a Master Architect on the San Diego Register. Therefore, staff recommends designation of the Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building under Criterion D as an example of a notable work by Master Architect Russell Forester.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building located at 800 Prospect Street be designated under HRB Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of International Modernist style and retaining a good level of architectural integrity from its ca. 1963 period of significance, and Criterion D as a notable work by Master Architect Russell Forester. Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives.



Jodie Brown, AICP
Senior Planner



Cathy Winterrowd
Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

jb/cw

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 4/28/2011

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 4/28/2011, to consider the historical designation of the Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building (owned by [separate resolution for each owner], San Diego, CA 92037) located at **800 Prospect Street, San Diego, CA 92037**, APN: (350-070-30-01 thru 350-070-30-30), further described as BLK 55 US (1A-5F) PER DOC63-197143&UND INT IN POR LOTS 18 THRU 20 IN the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Park Prospect Condominiums/Russell Forester Building on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C embodying the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of International Modernist style and retains a good level of architectural integrity from its ca. 1963 period of significance. Specifically, the resource retains its clean horizontal lines with concrete masonry and stucco exterior walls, floor-to-ceiling gray anodized aluminum windows and exterior doors combined with open balconies to create a sense of expanded space, and black vertical, non-structural standards that arch at the roof line. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

(2) The property is historically significant under CRITERION D as a notable work of Master Architect Russell Forester. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote: N/A

BY: _____
JOHN LEMMO, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGALITY: JAN I. GOLDSMITH,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
KEITH BAUERLE
Deputy City Attorney